

# How Timed Reading Improves Students in the Classroom

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**Abstract:** This paper is about how timed reading in a classroom setting can help students develop a fluidity in reading, talking, and thinking. Timed reading is a comprehensive tool used by many teachers in their elementary classroom. It has been proven in tests to improve and increase fluency in students, the reading rates of students, and their comprehension of the material. Timed readings can help improve the characteristics of readings for an individual of any age. It is used in many elementary schools, but is proven to help and increase the reading rates of adults. This paper will describe what timed reading is, how it helps in classrooms around the globe, and the steps that it takes to achieve the timed reading process.

**Keywords:** *Timed reading, fluency, comprehension, reading rate*

There are many ways that timed reading activities can improve the reading skill of students. There have been tests proving that timed reading can help students gain a fluency when reading, increase their reading rate, improve their comprehension of the material, and gain a better understanding of different writing styles. With timed reading in schools, students have the chance to obtain these skills and be able to use them throughout their life.

## What is Timed Reading?

Timed reading is a comprehensive tool that enables students to increase and improve reading rate and reading accuracy, which are both aspects of fluency. Reading rate is the speed (measured in words per minute) one reads at. Reading accuracy is known as how correctly one pronounces and reads words from a text. Timed reading also improves one's ability to comprehend reading material. This gives individuals the ability to understand what they are reading and put it into one coherent idea.

## How Fluency is Affected by Timed Reading

Fluency is one skill that can be strengthened through timed reading. Anna Chang, a Professor in the Applied English Department at Hsing-Wu College in Taiwan, characterizes fluency as "the ability to read text rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little attention to the

mechanics of reading such as decoding" (Chang 2010). Fluency is an important concept for children to have because it provides students with a skill that they can use their whole lives. I personally am a slow reader and become distracted very easily while reading various passages. I wish I had obtained fluency at a young age so that it would be easier for me to read these passages I struggle with. Having reading fluency would make it much easier to read passages at a higher rate with very little effort, which I believe is a skill that every person could use on a daily basis in everyday life.

According to Griffith and Rasinski (2004), fluency affects the comprehension of the material that a student is reading and their reading efficiency, which is important to have while reading in a classroom setting. A timed reading experiment was done on a classroom of students and they found that the children's fluency had increased and that the students had started to develop an expression within their readings (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). The timed reading exercise has provided children in this particular study a skill that is valuable in schools today. Kids are being asked to read multiple chapters of novels in one night. With high fluency, obtained from timed reading, it would become effortless for the students to read several chapters for the next day. Not only will the students be reading faster, but they also will be able to understand and comprehend the material as they read it so they grasp a better idea of the meaning of the work itself.

## Effects of Timed Reading on Reading Rate

Timed readings can also help improve the reading rate of many types of students. In order to calculate the reading rate of students, a book is chosen that is at their current reading level, and they are tested on how many words can they read correctly in a one minute time frame (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). In most cases, the students are recorded on a chart once each day. The record will show the amount of correctly read words vs. the amount of incorrectly read ones. This test will continue once every day until the student has reached zero incorrect words read and can read every word in the passage correctly within one minute. After the passage is complete, the student will move on to a different book that suits their reading level (Hudson et al., 2005).

Chang conducted a study to see how timed readings affect the reading rate of 84 college students. The students were split into two groups, one control group, and a group that would engage in timed readings. The two groups' reading rates were calculated and named "Time 1." After being tested, the experimental group engaged in timed reading sessions. The students' reading rates were then again tested and named "Time 2." These results show that the control group had a slight increase of 5% and the experimental group increased by an impeccable 25% in their reading rates (Chang, 2010). This shows that no matter the age, timed reading can help improve the speed that individuals read different passages at.

Another test by Chang was done on 35 adults that are considered foreign to the English language. The students were split into two different groups, a group for timed reading strategies and a group for repeated reading strategies. They also took a test prior to the reading intervention and a post-test, after a reading intervention. The reading rates of participants in the timed reading group increased by 50 words per minute or 49% in their case, while a repeated reading group's rate only improved by 27% (Chang, 2012). This shows that even if English is not the student's first language, the reading rate can be improved through timed reading tests. This also shows that timed reading is more of a trustworthy technique than repeated reading when a higher reading rate is the desired result.

### Personal Experience

Not only does timed reading have a positive effect on children that participate, but it can also help increase the reading rate and accuracy of adults. In both Chang studies, it is shown that the college students in the experimental group and adults with English as a foreign language can also show an increase in reading rates. This is very helpful because although it is important to teach the youth the tool of timed reading, it is also very helpful to know that even adults can improve. As I said before, I have difficulty reading rapidly and comprehending the passages I read. Through tests of timed reading that I have personally taken, I have noticed a drastic change in my reading style. The first step I took was to select a book at my reading level. I next created a daily chart to record my reading accuracy on. After doing this, I set a timer to one minute and began reading. Every time I stumbled or read a word incorrectly I wrote a dash on a piece of paper. Once

the minute was up, I totaled up the tallies I made on the paper and marked that number with an x. I did this once everyday with the same reading until I totaled zero misread words. I have noticed while reading different passages that I have a better understanding of the material I am reading and am able to read at a much faster pace than normal. Timed reading is a fantastic tool to use when one wants to increase their fluency, improve on reading accuracy, and increasing reading rate.

### Conclusion

Timed reading is a very beneficial tool to use both in and out of a classroom setting. It has been proven to increase the fluency and reading rate of students in elementary schools and in adults. Elementary students that were involved in the timed reading exercise showed an increase in fluency which also lead them to use expression in their reading (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Chang also proved that not only are elementary students affected by timed reading, but that adults can improve in their fluency and reading rate as well.

Studies show that timed reading has a positive effect on students' reading fluency. This is a very handy tool to use in elementary school classrooms. As a future teacher, I value this tool because I believe it could help many future students develop a reading fluency which is a skill they can use throughout their lives. Being able to read effortlessly and to comprehend the material that one is reading is something every person should have and value.

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